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ABSTRACT

This ex-post facto, quasi-experimental study was conducted to determine whether students taught nursing math in the classroom did better than students who did not take the nursing math course in the classroom. First-year students enrolled in the Long Beach City College Associate Degree Nursing Program were selected as the treatment sample. Thirty randomly selected students who did not enroll in the course were compared to the treatment group. The t-test was used to determine if the group that took the math course did significantly better on the "Medication Math" examination than the group who did not experience the course. The t-test revealed that there was no significant difference at the .05 level between the two groups. It is recommended that while a formal math couse should not be required, the practice of requiring students to take the independent study module for nursing math should be continued. It is also recommended that faculty should give attention to the math scores of entering students. A sample "Medication Math" test containing 30 multiple-choice items is appended. (Author/YP)

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COMPARING THE EFFECT UPON STUDENTS WHO ARE TAUGHT NURSING MATH IN THE CLASSROOM WITH STUDENTS WHO DO NOT EXPERIENCE THE NURSING MATH COURSE

Applied Educational Research
and Evaluation Seminar

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Nova University

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ABSTRACT

COMPARING THE EFFECT UPON STUDENTS WHO ARE TAUGHT NURSING MATH IN THE CLASSROOM WITH STUDENTS WHO DO NOT EXPERIENCE THE NURSING MATH COURSE

Brenda McCane Harrell, R.N., M.S.N.

This ex-post facto, quasi-experimental study was conducted to determine the effect of nursing math taught in the classroom upon student performance with students who did not experience the nursing math course. First-year students enrolled in the Long Beach City College Associate Degree Nursing Program in Fall 1984 were chosen. The sample consisted of thirty randomly selected students who took the nursing math course and thirty randomly selected students who did not enroll in the course. The t-test was used to determine if the group that took the math course did significantly better on the "Nursing Math" examination than the group who did not experience the course. The t-test revealed that there was no significant difference at the .05 level in the two groups and the null hypothesis was accepted.

Recommendations included that the practice of requiring students to take the independent study module for nursing math should be continued. Faculty should give attention to the math scores of entering students.

Further testing should be conducted to determine if there is a positive correlation between math test scores and the success of the students in the nursing program.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Underlying Problem

Students enrolled in the Long Beach City College Associate Degree Nursing Program are expected to calculate drug dosages with 100 percent accuracy. According to the program's math policy, each student is required to pass a nursing math examination during the The nursing curriculum does not provide for math course; therefore, it has been an expectation that basic math concepts have been learned by students prior to entrance into the nursing program. The overall performance of students has been low on the nursing math exams and as a result, faculty members have expressed concern for helping students increase their level of performance in the nursing program.

Purpose of the Investigation

The purpose of this investigation was to compare the nursing math test scores of a group of nursing students who were taught nursing math for drug administration in the classroom with with a group of nursing students who went through the independent learning module for nursing math.

Independent and Dependent Variables

The independent variable, the variable causing a change in the observed results, was the teaching method. The dependent variable, the measurable response or output phenomenon, was the test scores from the math exam earned by both groups of nursing students.

Research Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that nursing students who were taught nursing math would score higher on the nursing math exam than the students who took the independent learning module for nursing math.

This was an ex-post facto, quasi-experimental study in which the scores of two groups of nursing students on a nursing math exam were compared.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Background

The safe and accurate administration of medications (meds) is one of the nurse's most important responsibilities. Students are expected to calculate drug dosages in the clinical setting as the need arises. It is evident that the number of medication errors by students are increasing yearly by the number of incident reports that are completed by the students. Due to the varied math backgrounds of students, the faculty cannot be sure that the necessary concepts have been learned for accurate calculations of drug dosages.

To meet the nursing math requirements, the faculty developed math sub-modules that are to be passed by students on a self-paced basis. According to the math sub-module policy, a student can only take the nursing math exam twice in order to obtain a passing score. Over the years, the number of students requiring a second attempt to pass the sub-module has been increasing. This study was conducted in order to determine if a formal course that teaches math in relationship to drug calculations would be helpful if

taught in the nursing curriculum at Long Beach City College.

Significance to the Institution

Recently, a math policy was developed by the nursing faculty to prevent students from progressing through the nursing program who are unable to calculate math for meds. Math for meds are specific equations that are used for calculating dosages for administering medications. The faculty all agreed that students must meet the math requirements in order to be considered safe in the clinical setting.

Since the attrition rate is increasing yearly due to failure on the nursing math test, this study was undertaken to determine if a nursing math module should be taught in a structured setting rather than being an independent learning activity.

Relationship to the Seminar

This practicum was related to the Applied Educational Research and Evaluation Seminar because it was a quasi-experimental, ex-post facto experiment which was the focus of the seminar. The concepts learned in the seminar were applied in conducting this practicum.

Review of the Literature

The review of literature focused on two areas: (1) instructional designs for teaching math concepts, and (2) independent learning designs.

At the college level, Bartz and Darby (1979) conducted a scientific study of Supervised and Non-supervised Programmed Instruction in the University settings and later studied the Effects of a Programmed Textbook on Achievement Under Three Techniques of instruction.

In the study of supervised and non-supervised programmed instruction the results indicated that students who worked independently of classroom supervision on a programmed text did not perform as well on tests as students supervised in study programmed text. Again, in the second study, the post-test mean of the students using programmed texts in full-time independent study was the lowest of all six groups. In the same study, it was also noted that a large proportion of all students in independent study failed. Those students, however, on programmed texts and attending classes, required the least amount of help.

According to Ward (1971) when the learning

environment is controlled in terms of subject matter content and materials, and proportion of time devoted to independent vs. group learning, the group learning situation produces outcomes that are superior to those of the independent learning situation.

Christensen (1970) found that 52% to 54% of the number of students that registered for a statistical course chose to attend lectures frequently as almost always. Forty percent of the students that completed the course did it on their own. In addition, the data showed no association between attendance at the lecture and student GPA.

Schultz (1984) studied the self-directed use of concrete models with five average ability students and found that the greatest gain in performance and their problem-solving ability were shown by the average ability students.

According to Winne and Marx (1983) a major feature of students' cognitive responses to instruction was that the clarity with which they perceived the teacher's intentions in instructional stimuli often was inversely proportional to the amount of information which students had to cognitively process.

Burton (1981) found that every student at every level is seen to learn mathematics individually and personally, putting an individual stamp on each incoming perception.

In O'Reilly's (1980) study of regular and advanced secondary math students indicated that higher achievement in regular classes is associated with teacher-centered instructional methods and the attitude that math is a closed, fixed system. In advanced classes these relationshipships are reversed.

Engaged time and its relation to teacher-led versus seat-work activities of fourth grade students learning mathematics concepts was investigated and the results indicated that the amount of sustained time in a single instructional activity was most closely related to student achievement (Sindelar and others, 1984).

Simpson (1983) studied independent learning strategies and concluded that there are three insights that are pertinent to educators. First, there is no superior learning strategy. So long as a study strategy requires the student to attend, interact, reconstruct, and elaborate upon the underlying meaning of the text, subsequent learning is generally enhanced. Second, studying is and interactive process. Third, students cannot control or regulate the strategies.

According to Bynum and Rosenblat (1984) self instruction can work exceptionally well with accountability being the key. They go on to explain that with carefully planning and administration, the

self-study concept can offer limitless growth for the training function.

Simpson and Nist (1984) described a planning model (PLAE - preplan, list, activate, evaluate) that provides a practical guide in how to determine one's own learning tasks, and how to activate and evaluate a plan in terms of its efficiency and effectiveness.

The review of the literature was limited in terms of identifying the best learning strategies for mathematical concepts. However, the literature pointed out that students' performance was higher in teacher assisted courses than students' performance who utilized independent studies.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

This investigation was undertaken to compare the the nursing math test scores of a group of nursing students that were taught nursing math for drug administration in the classroom with a group of nursing students who went through the independent learning module for nursing math.

Sample Selection

The students enrolled in the first-year of Long Beach City College Associate Degree Nursing Program in Spring 1985 were chosen for participation in the study. The students were randomly selected on the basis of their application acceptance date. The first thirty students were selected to enroll in a formal nursing math class and the next group of thirty students were selected to complete the nursing math objectives independently.

Collection of Data

One group (Group A) enrolled in the nursing math class that was six weeks in length. The thirty students were given course objectives, had teacher

instruction for two hours weekly, participated in group discussions, completed class projects and homework assignments. The second group (Group B) were given the same course objectives to complete independently without precribed teacher contact hours. They had open access to the Learning Center if they desired to use it.

At the end of the six week period, the same nursing math exam was administered to the first group (Group A) and the second group (Group B) for comparison of scores.

Instrument

The instrument utilized (See Appendix A) consisted of thirty items selected from "Medication Math," an examination presently used by faculty at Long Beach City College for evaluation of nursing students at the end of the nursing math sub-module. The thirty items reflect all of the learning objectives pertaining to the nursing math sub-module.

This instrument was developed by the nursing faculty at Long Beach City College. Validity and reliability of the instrument was based upon faculty testing the instrument for four years with different levels of students in the nursing program and performing item analysis for each of the questions each

time the instrument was utilized. The faculty consulted with math experts to get input concerning whether or not the items on the instrument reflected the learning objectives.

The thiry items were rated together to recieve a total score for each student. The total score for each student was calculated to a percentage. Seventy-five percent was considered a passing score.

Research Question

The research question addressed was: "Is there a difference in the academic performance of the nursing students who are taught nursing math in the classroom and the nursing students who do not experience the classroom instruction?"

Treatment of Data

The independent, two tailed t-test was used in this expost facto quasi-experimental investigation to determine if the students taught nursing math in the classroom did better than the students who were not taught in the classroom. The t-test was appropriate because it is a statistical test to determine the significance of difference between two sample means and was used to analyse the data. The t-test was two-tailed since the difference between the sample means was not predicted in the hypothesis.

Null Hypothesis

The null hypothesis tested in this study was: There is no significant difference in the scores earned on the nursing math exam between nursing students who were taught nursing math in the classroom and nursing students who were not taught nursing math in the classroom.

Alternative Hypotheses

The alternative hypotheses were: 1) the group of nursing students who were taught math in the classroom (Group A) scores will be higher than the group of nursing students who were not taught nursing math in the classroom (Group B). 2) the group of nursing students who were not taught nursing math in the classroom (Group B) scores will be higher than the group of nursing students who were taught nursing math in the classroom (Group A).

Basic Assumptions

Basic assumptions pertinent to this study were: 1) the sample of subjects chosen for the study was representative of the general population of nursing students enrolled at Long Beach City College; 2) the testing tool was effective in determining student

response to classroom teaching, and; 3) both groups of students were equal in their abilities.

Limitations of the Study

The factors that contributed to the limitations of the study were: 1) The student population was limited to first-year students enrolled in the Long Beach City College Associate Degree Nursing Program in Spring 1985; 2) the generalization of the results were limited to the testing instrument developed by the nursing faculty at Long Beach City College, and; 3) the study had application only to Associate Degree Nursing Programs.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this practicum:

Module: a course that is six weeks in length with specified objectives and learning activities.

Sub-module: A unit within a module with specified objectives and is studied independently by students. The objectives are accomplished by passing a written examination on a pre-determined date.

Nursing Math: Math concepts that are specific for calculating drug dosages.

Long Beach City College: A California community college that offers open access to low cost,

comprehensive, instructional programs in higher education that are responsive to the diverse needs of the community.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

The test scores of sixty first-year nursing students were obtained to compare their performance on the nursing math examination. The mean score of Group A was 24.100 and of Group B 25.733. The calculated t value was -1.285 and the critical t value was 2.000 (see Table 1). The null hypothesis was accepted for this investigation at the .05 level of significance with 58 degrees of freedom. There was no significant difference in the scores of the students in Group A who were taught nursing math in the classroom and the scores of the students in Group B who were not taught nursing math in the classroom.

Table 1

A Comparison of Test Scores Between Nursing Students Who Were Taught Nursing Math (Group A) and Nursing Students Who Were Not Taught Nursing Math (Group B)

Students	n	mean	SD	t value*
Group A	30	24.100	6.343	-1.285
Group B	30	25.733	3.503	

*Critical t value = 2.000 for 58 degrees of freedom

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

This investigation was conducted to compare the effects of nursing math tauhgt in the classroom with students who do not experience the nursing math course. It was hypothesized that the group of nursing students who were taught math in the classroom (Group A) would score higher on the nursing math exam than the students who took the independent study module (Group B). Generally, the first-year nursing students have exhibited many deficiencies in math, therefore, it was felt that if students were taught nursing math, their performance would increase.

The results of this investigation indicate that there was no significant difference in the performance of the students that took the nursing math course and the students that took the independent study module.

The review of the literature indicated that group learning situations produces outcomes that are superior to those that are done independently. The students that attended the math classes (Group A) did not score

significantly higher than the students who did not attend the math classes (Group B). This was not what was expected. When the scores for both groups were examined together there was no significant difference in the two groups at the .05 level and the null hypothesis was accepted.

The review of the literature also pointed out that self-instruction can work well. It is the opinion of the Long Beach City College faculty that the first-year students' math background is not strong enough for them to be successful in the nursing program without some classroom instruction in nursing math.

The overall concensus of the literature suggests that students do perform higher in teacher assisted courses than in independent courses. No significant difference was found in the present study in the scores of the two groups. The mean score for Group A was 24.10 and the mean score for Group B was 25.73. It is evident that the findings of this study did not support the notion that students perform higher in teacher assisted courses. It is possible that other factors in regards to the study population should have been taken into consideration. The only factor considered was making application to the nursing program.

Implications

This study has implications for the nursing faculty at Long Beach City College in that they have expressed concern for helping students increase their performance in the nursing program. The study indicated that first-year nursing students who do not take a formal math course do just as well as first-year nursing students who are enrolled in a formal math course. The faculty's opinion that a formal math course will significantly increase the first-year student's performance must now be re-examined. The students in Group A have been noted to be just as successful as Group B in the nursing program.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based upon the findings of this investigation:

1. A formal math course should not be required. The practice of requiring students to take the independent study module for nursing math should be continued.

2. Further testing should be conducted to determine if there is a positive correlation between math test scores and the success of the students in the nursing program

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE INSTRUMENT

MEDICATION MATH:

DIRECTIONS: Solve the following drug problems. Decimals should be rounded off to the nearest tenth. Watch the zeros. Be sure your answer is labeled correctly:

1. To give Digoxin 0.125 milligrams, when you have on hand Digoxin 0.25 milligram tablets, you should give:

   A. 1/2 tab
   B. 1 tab
   C. 1-1/2 tabs
   D. 2 tabs
   E. None of these

2. To give Digoxin 0.5 milligrams, when you have on hand Digoxin 0.125 milligram tablets, you should give:

   A. 1/2 tab
   B. 1 tab
   C. 1-1/2 tabs
   D. 2 tabs
   E. None of these

3. To give Digoxin 0.375 milligrams, when you have on hand Digoxin 0.125 milligram tablets, you should give:

   A. 1/2 tab
   B. 1 tab
   C. 1-1/2 tabs
   D. 2 tabs
   E. None of these

4. To give Morphine grains 1/6, when you have on hand Morphine grains 1/4 in 1 milliliter, you should give:

   A. 1/3 ml
   B. 0.3 ml
   C. .4 ml
   D. 1.5 ml
   E. None of these

5. To give Morphine grains 1/8, when you have on hand Morphine grains 1/4 in 1 milliliter, you should give:

   A. 0.5 ml
   B. 0.06 ml
   C. 1.9 ml
   D. 5 ml
   E. None of these

6. To give Morphine grains 1/4, when you have on hand Morphine grains 1/8 in 1 milliliter, you should give:

   A. .5 ml
   B. 1 ml
   C. 1.5 ml
   D. 2 ml
   E. None of these

7. To give Morphine grains 1/4, when you have on hand Morphine grains 1/6 in 1 milliliter, you should give:

   A. .5 ml
   B. 1 ml
   C. 1.5 ml
   D. 2 ml
   E. None of these

MEDICATION MATH:

8. To give Keflin 250 milligrams, when you have on hand Keflin 500 milligrams in 2.2 milliliters, you should give:

A. 0.1 ml
B. 1 ml
C. 1.1 ml
D. 11 ml
E. None of these

9. To give Keflin 125 milligrams, when you have on hand Keflin 0.5 Grams in 3.3 milliliters, you should give:

A. .825 ml
B. 0.8 ml
C. 0.9 ml
D. 8 ml
E. None of these

10. To give Keflin 300 milligrams, when you have on hand Keflin 0.5 Grams in 3.3 milliliters, you should give:

A. 0.9 ml
B. 1 ml
C. 1.98 ml
D. 2 ml
E. None of these

11. To give Crysticillin 800,000 units, when you have on hand Crysticillin 200,000 units in 1 milliliter, you should give:

A. 1 ml
B. 2 ml
C. 3 ml
D. 4 ml
E. None of these

12. To give Crysticillin 400,000 units, when you have on hand Crysticillin 200,000 units in 1 milliliter, you should give:

A. 1 ml
B. 2 ml
C. 3 ml
D. 4 ml
E. None of these

13. To give Crysticillin 800,000 units, when you have on hand Crysticillin 600,000 units in 1 milliliter, you should give:

A. 1 ml
B. 2 ml
C. 3 ml
D. 4 ml
E. None of these

14. To give Crysticillin 450,000 units, when you have on hand Crysticillin 200,000 units in 1 milliliter, you should give:

A. 1 ml
B. 2 ml
C. 3 ml
D. 4 ml
E. None of these

MEDICATION MATH:

15. To give Crvsticillin 900,000 units, when vou have on hand Crvsticillin 1,200,000 units in 1 milliliter, you hsould give:

A. 1 ml
B. 2 ml
C. 3 ml
D. 4 ml
E. None of these

16. To give Keflin 1 Gram, when you have on hand Keflin 500 milligrams in 1.1 milliliters, you should give:

A. 1.1 ml
B. 2.1 ml
C. 2.2 ml
D. 3.3 ml
E. None of these

17. To give Keflin 750 milligrams, when you have on hand Keflin 0.5 Grams in 2.2 milliliters, you should give:

A. 1.1 ml
B. 2.1 ml
C. 2.2 ml
D. 3.3 ml
E. None of these

18. To give Morphine grains 1/10, when you have on hand Morphine grains 1/6 in 1 milliliter, vou should give:

A. .6 ml
B. 1.2 ml
C. 1.6 ml
D. 1.7 ml
E. None of these

19. To give Digoxin 125 micrograms, when vou have on hand Digoxin 0.25 milligram tablets, you should give:

A. 1/2 tab
B. 1 tab
C. 1-1/2 tab
D. 2 tabs
E. None of these

20. To give Digoxin 375 micrograms, when you have on hand Digoxin 0.125 milligram tablets, you should give:

A. 1/2 tab
B. 1 tab
C. 1-1/2 tab
D. 2 tabs
E. None of these

21. To give Stelazine 10 milligrams, when you have on hand Stelazine 5 milligram tablets, vou should give:

A. 2 tabs
B. 3 tabs
C. 4 tabs
D. 5 tabs
E. None of these

MEDICATION MATH:

22. To give Stelazine 15 milligrams, when you have on hand Stelazine 5 milligram tabs, you should give:

A. 2 tabs
B. 3 tabs
C. 4 tabs
D. 5 tabs
E. None of these

23. To give Stelazine 10 milligrams, when you have on hand Stelazine 2 milligram tablets, you should give:

A. 2 tabs
B. 3 tabs
C. 4 tabs
D. 5 tabs
E. None of these

24. To give Stelazine 10 milligrams, when you have on hand Stelazine 5 milligrams in 1 milliliter, you should give:

A. 2 ml
B. 3 ml
C. 4 ml
D. 5 ml
E. None of these

25. To give Stelazine 3.5 milligrams, when you have on hand Stelazine 5 milligrams in 1 milliliter, vou should give:

A. .5 ml
B. 0.7 ml
C. 1 ml
D. 1.4 ml
E. None of these

26. To give Loridine 500 milligrams, when you have on hand Loridine 1 Gram in 3 milliliters, you should give:

A. 1 ml
B. 1.5 ml
C. 3 ml
D. 4.5 ml
E. None of these

27. To give Loridine 750 milligrams, when you have on hand Loridine 1 Gram in 3 milliliters, you should give:

A. 2 ml
B. 2.250 ml
C. 3 ml
D. 7.5 ml
E. None of these

28. To give Loridine 500 micrograms, when you have on hand Loridine 1 milligram in 3 milliliters, you should give:

A. 1 ml
B. 1.5 ml
C. 3 ml
D. 4.5 ml
E. None of these

MEDICATION MATH:

29. To give Loridine 0.25 Grams, when you have on hand Loridine 0.5 Grams in 3 milliliters, you should give:

A. 1 ml
B. 1.5 ml
C. 3 ml
D. 4.5 ml
E. None of these

30. To give Loridine 250 milligrams, when you have on hand Loridine 1 Gram in 3 milliliters, you should give:

A. 1 ml
B. 1.5 ml
C. 3 ml
D. 4.5 ml
E. None of these